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Message Text

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44
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-10 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 AS-01 SCCT-01 /080 W
---------- 045325
P R 171422Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9012
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 7291

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PFOR IS US
SUBJ: SAUNDERS TESTIMONY CRITICALLY RECEIVED

1. SUMMARY: ISRAELI PRESS CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON SAUNDERS STATEMENT AND ITS POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS ON US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. MOST EDITORIALS ARE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF BOTH ITS SUBSTANCE AND TIMING OF ITS PUBLICATION, AND EXPRESS CONCERN OVER FUTURE AMERICAN MOVES ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. PRESS NOTES THAT MINISTERS ADOPTED CRITICAL STAND AT NOV 16 CABINET MEETING (SEPTEL), AND ALSO HIGHLIGHTS SECRETARY'S ASSURANCES THAT US POSITION ON PALESTINIANS REMAINS UNCHANGED. END SUMMARY.

2. ALL NEWSPAPERS FRONTPAGE REPORTS ON CABINET DISCUSSION OF SAUNDERS STATEMENT STRESSING STRONG CRITICISM EXPRESSED BY MINISTERS. JERUSALEM POST (LANDAU) WRITES THAT "THE ISRAELI REACTION MADE IT CLEAR THAT ISRAEL VIEWS THE TESTIMONY AS A SIGNIFICANT AND UNWELCOME DEPARTURE FROM PREVIOUS AMERICAN POLICY ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AND THE PLO...THE WIDESPREAD FEELING WAS THAT THE DOCUMENT REPRESENTED A DECIDED LURCH TOWARDS THE PLO...THE CONTENT,
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TIMING AND TENOR OF...PAPER HAVE ALL CAUSED CONCERN IN

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JERUSALEM. LANDAU ADDS THAT "THE FEAR IN JERUSALEM IS THAT...
SAUNDERS' TESTIMONY WAS THE BEGINNING OF AN EFFORT TO PREPARE
US PUBLIC OPINION FOR A POLICY SHIFT ON THE PLO. ACCORDING
TO THIS THESIS, THE US HAS ALL BUT GIVEN UP HOPE OF A QUICK
INTERIM ACCORD ON THE GOLAN AND HAS BEGUN TO TAKE SERIOUSLY
ASAD'S REPEATED ASSERTATION THAT HE WILL NOT PROGRESS TOWARDS A
SETTLEMENT AS LONG AS THE PALESTINIANS ARE LEFT IN THE LURCH..."

3. DAVAR (ESHED) STATES THAT ZADOK, GALILI, PERES,
YAACOBI AND HAMMER WERE PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF THE DOCUMENT,
AND MADE FOLLOWING POINTS: "THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PLO'S
AIM TO ELIMINATE ISRAEL WERE SOFTENED AND BLURRED..., JORDAN
WAS PUSHED ASIDE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AN AMERICAN DOCUMENT,
FROM A POSITION OF CHIEF CANDIDATE FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH
ISRAEL ON THE PALESITINIAN SUBJECT...THE...DOCUMENT
DOES NOT DEFINE THE ISRAELI POSITION, IMPLYING THAT GOI
HAS NO UNITED POSITION..." ESHED ADDS THAT "ALL MINISTERS
STRESSED THAT SAUNDERS IS THE ADMINISTRATION'S REPRESENTATIVE
AND...HIS TESTIMONY MUST BE TREATED WITH THE UTMOST GRAVITY...."

4. WEEKEND EDITORIALS ALSO ARE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF SAUNDERS
STATEMENT.. AL-HAMISHMAR (NOV 16) EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT
SUCH A DOCUMENT WAS COMPOSED WITHOUT CONSULTATIONS WITH
ISRAEL, FORSEES THE POSSIBILITY ISRAEL WILL BE FACED
WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI AND THEREFORE CALLS FOR AN ISRAELI
INITIATIVE TO SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. MAARIV (NOV 16)
WRITES THAT "KISSINGER'S EFFORTS TO ASSUAGE ISRAEL'S FEARS
WERE NOT CONVINCING...WHY WAS THE REPORT GIVEN SO MUCH
PUBLICITY, AND WHY HAS NO ONE IN THE HIERARCHY DISASSOCIATED
HIMSELF FROM IT?..."

5. JERUSALEM POST (NOV 17) IS ALSO HIGHLY CRITICAL OF
THE REPORT: "...WASHINGTON ARGUES THAT THE DOCUMENT DOES
NOT REPRESENT ANY CHANGE IN THE BASIC US POSITION ON THE
APLESTINIAN ISSUE. BUT THE PREPONDERANCE GIVEN TO THE PLO...
CLEARLY INDICATES A NEW TREND IN AMERICAN THINKING...ONE
MUST WONDER AT THE STRANGE TIMING OF THE PUBLICATION...COMING
ONLY ONE WEEK AFTER THE THE SHAMEFUL ANTI-ZIONIST UN ASSEMBLY
VOTE...THERE ARE OMISSIONS AND EMPHASES IN THE SAUNDERS
DOCUMENT WHICH CAN ONLY BE EXPLAINED BY WASHINGTON'S INCREASING
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DISREGARD FOR ITS UNDERTAKINS TOWARDS ISRAEL WHICH FORMED
AN INTERGRAL PART OF THE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT..." JERUSALEM
POST CONCLUDES THAT "IF PM RABIN SAID ONLY TWO DAYS AGO THAT
ISRAEL WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHETHER THERE IS ANY
POINT IN ADDITIONAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ARABS, ONE MUST
NOW ADD ANOTHER QUESTION MARK DIRECTED TOWARDS THE AMERICANS".
MAARIV EDITORIAL (NOV 17) CLAIMS THAT IT SUITS KISSINGER
TO MAINTAIN "AN INTENTIONALLY AMBIGUOUS SITUATION--THAT

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IS THE ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH HE IS AT HOME, AND IN WHICH HE
OPERATES BEST...."

6. WASHINGTON BASED ISRAELI REPORTERS ALSO ANALYSE SAUNDERS
DOCUMENT, HAARETZ (MARGALIT) VIEWS DOCUMENT AS
OMINOUS AND CONSTITUTING A CHANGE IN US POLICY, WHILE DAVAR
(BARNEA) SEES NO CHANGE N US POLICY. MARGALIT WRITES THAT IF
GOI ACCEPTS KISSINGER'S DENIAL OF A CHANGE IN US POLICY, IT
DISREGARDS SEVERAL FACTORS: THAT THE ADMINISTRATION NOW SUDDENLY
ASCRIBES MODERATION TO LARGE PARTS OF THEPLO, THAT THE
PAPER HAS NO QUARREL WITH THE RABAT RESOLUTION VESTING THE
SOLE REPRESENTATION OF THE PALESTINIANS IN THE PLO, AND
THAT THE ADMINISTRATION NOW ASSIGNS PRIORITY TO THE PALESTINIAN
ISSUE WHICH WAS TO BE LEFT TO THE LAST. MARGALIT STRESSES
THAT THE DOCUMENT MAY NOT BE OPERATIVE, BUT, LIKE THE
ROGERS PLAN, IT IS SOMETHING ON WHICH THE ARABS CAN ALREADY
COUNT AND MUST BE REGARDED AS "LANDMARK".

7. BARNEA ON OTHER HAND CHARACTERIZES DOCUMENT AS A
BALANCED, FACUTAL SUMMARY OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEMS AND
HISTORY, WHILE NOTING THAT SOME FORMULATIONS ARE NOT EXACTLY
CONVENIENT FOR ISRAEL, AND SOME COULD BE CONTESTED. THERE
ARE OTHER POINTS THAT DO NOT CONFORM WITH OFFICIAL ISRAELI
LINE AND COULD HAVE UNDESIRABLE IMPLICATIONS. HE CONCLUDES THAT
THERE ARE UNLIKELY TO BE IMMEDIATE ADMINISTRATION STEPS IN THE
DIRECTION OF THE PALESTINIANS, "UNLESS JERUSALEM FORCES
WASHINGTON'S HAND BY ILL-JUDGED REACTION FROM GOVERNMENT CIRCLES."
TOON

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